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BAGHDAD FOR NCT

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SUBJECT: A CASUAL COMEDY: SOUTH CENTRAL PROVINCIAL COUNCILS THREATEN  
TO SUSPEND RELATIONS WITH COALITION FORCES

CLASSIFIED BY: Alfred Fonteneau, Regional Coordinator, REO  
Hillah, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b)

11. (U) This is a Babil PRT Cable

12. (C) SUMMARY. During a June 23 meeting held in Najaf, representatives from all south-central provincial councils (PC), as well as from Baghdad and Kirkuk, held an "emergency" meeting concerning the arrest of Karbala Provincial Council Chair Ageel Fahim Al-Zubidy. On June 15 U.S. and Iraqi military forces arrested Al-Zubidy at his home for planning and carrying out attacks and assassinations against Iraqi civilians and Coalition Forces (CF). Al-Zubidy, now in U.S. military custody, has confessed to these crimes including the murder of six U.S. soldiers over the past three years. Local politicians, including the Karbala PC, however, insist that Al-Zubidy is innocent and that his detention is illegal. The incident has generated such discontent amongst local governments in south-central that the Karbala PC ultimately called for an emergence meeting to be held in Najaf. The participants, in the meeting held on June 23, issued a statement that calls for the suspension of relations with CF and suggests that the Government of Iraqi (GOI) grant local officials diplomatic immunity. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) Begin informal translation of text:

Against the background of the arrest of Mr. Ageel Fahim Al-Zubidy, the Chairman of the Karbala Provincial Council, and due to the repeated assaults by occupation forces against the great innocent citizens of Iraq and under the slogan of one voice for local governments to defend all rights, freedom and ostracizing terror, also in a climate that is charged with denunciation and condemning the innocents above, delegations from the provincial councils and governors discussed and issued the following resolutions:

- Call for a general strike of all official and government departments on Wednesday and Thursday in all provinces.

- Give the occupation forces seven days from this meeting date to release Mr. Ageel Fahim Al-Zubidy or all relations will be frozen with occupation forces in all provinces.

- Submit a proposal for diplomatic immunity for all local elected government officials (governors and PC members) to the Council of Representatives (CoR). This will provide stability to local governments so that they can perform their duties in accordance with legislation.

- Authorize the Karbala PC to form a delegation to represent all Provincial Councils in Iraq to meet with Iraqi and international

officials to explain the aggression against Karbala.

- Demand that the Iraqi government detach all special forces and intelligence agencies from the occupation forces and make them Iraqi organizations under the authority of the Iraqi government exclusively. Demand that the Iraqi Government rearrange their present structure.

Conference of Iraqi Provincial Councils  
Emergence Meeting, June 23, 2006  
Holy Karbala

Provinces represented: Baghdad, Basra, Diyalla, Wasit, Dhi Qar, Diwaniyah, Najaf, Kirkuk, Babil, and Karbala

14. (C) COMMENT. The arrest of Al-Zubidy struck a rather sensitive nerve, as this is the first time that all south-central provinces have come together and issued a direct statement against CF. Local contacts seem to believe that this declaration is little more than grandiose posturing intended to galvanize the population for the upcoming local and provincial elections. Most local contacts have also related that such grandstanding has little actual substance and suggest that the PCs will not actually carry out their threat. However, it is equally as likely that the PCs of south-central are rallying behind Al-Zubidy because they fear that they could be next. If this is true, the final salvo in the casual comedy of suspending relations with CF, may in fact, have come to an end. This unfortunate possibility may well indicate that the PC members of south-central are much more actively involved in anti-Coalition activities than we would like to believe. END COMMENT.

FONTENEAU